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beer. In fact they often subsist entirely on the latter to the complete exclusion of solids. Their wives, children, and courtiers also eat on the average more than the ordinary family, so much so that natives describe especially lavish hospitality as 'housekeeping after the fashion of the capital' (*umusango wa ku musumba*). But the difference is one of certainty of supply rather than of greatly increased consumption per day, and a small class of individuals only are affected. Otherwise the rich man and his poorer neighbours eat very much the same throughout the year.

Sex distinctions are not marked either. The man gets a larger share of meat or any favourite relish, but there are no foods specially tabooed to women, and I do not think the inequality is any greater than that common in many working households in this country. Age distinctions in diet are not pronounced. Young boys between 10 and 16 are probably the worst-fed section of the community since they have to forage for themselves and have no regular portion allotted to them, but even then the difference is not a striking one. Geographical variations in the food-supply certainly exist, but they are limited chiefly to differences in the amount of meat and fish consumed and not to the staple food. Therefore for all general purposes the following account may be taken as applying to the population as a whole.

Variations from Hunger to Plenty.

The most pronounced feature of this dietary is its alternation between hunger and plenty, a characteristic common to African peoples in areas where the distribution of rain allows only one season of cultivation a year, and where one staple crop is relied upon. In this territory the existence of a definite scarcity is noticed at once by the most casual observer. The Bemba constantly talk about 'hunger months' as distinguished from food months. At the end of the rainy season they regularly expect a shortage, whether it is severe or not. When the scarcity becomes marked the whole appearance of village life is changed. For adults meals are reduced from two to one a day, and beer is rarely if ever brewed. Children who seem to munch extras all day long in the plentiful season (April to October) are reduced to a single dish late in the day. In one bad year I saw cases of elderly people who ate nothing during the course of a day, and though this is not common, most adult natives can remember occasions when they went two days

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idiom. To speak of a chief is to mention before the end of the conversation his reputation for generosity or meanness in the giving of porridge and beer. To describe an attitude to any particular kinsman leads almost invariably to a comment, for instance, on the food in his granary, the number of relatives he supports, the share of meat he has asked for, or the amount of beer he contributed at the marriage of his daughter or the visit of an elder. In daily life the women, whether at work in the kitchen or sitting gossiping on their verandas at night, exchange interminable criticisms as to the way in which some particular dish of food has been divided, or the distribution of the four or five gourds of beer made at a brew. These casual observations of native life are significant. For us it requires a real effort of imagination to visualize a state of society in which food matters so much and from so many points of view, but this effort is necessary if we are to understand the emotional background of Bemba ideas as to diet.

The Perfect Meal.

To the Bemba each meal, to be satisfactory, must be composed of two constituents: a thick porridge (*ubwali*) made of millet and the relish (*umunani*) of vegetables, meat, or fish, which is eaten with it.

(*a*) *Ubwali. Ubwali* is made from coarse-ground flour[1] poured into boiling water, stirred until the mixture is stiff, and then kneaded and patted with a strong wooden blade—the Bemba spoon (*miko*)—and served in the open eating-baskets which the natives call *icipe* (plur. *ifipe*) in warm brown lumps that are round in shape. There is no comparable English dish. *Ubwali* is commonly translated by 'porridge' but this is misleading. The hot water and meal are mixed in proportion of 3 to 2 to make *ubwali* and this produces a solid mass of the consistency of plasticine and quite unlike what we know as porridge.[2] *Ubwali* is eaten in hunks torn off in the hand, rolled into balls, dipped in relish, and bolted whole.

Millet has already been described as the main constituent of Bemba diet, but it is difficult for the European, accustomed as he is to a large variety of foodstuffs, to realize fully what a 'staple crop' can mean to a primitive people. To the Bemba, millet porridge is

[1] Usually finger-millet, but *ubwali* may also be made with Kaffir-corn or cassava flour.

[2] The exact proportions in one sample (examined by Mrs. Gore-Browne) were—water 62 per cent. to flour 38 per cent. The word 'porridge' seems, however, preferable to 'mush' used in some Bantu grammars.

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locusts, ants, vegetables (wild and cultivated), mushrooms, &c.—prepared to eat with porridge. The functions of the relish are two: first to make the *ubwali* easier to swallow, and second to give it taste. A lump of porridge is glutinous and also gritty—the latter not only owing to the flour of which it is made, but to the extraneous matter mixed in with it on the grindstone. It needs a coating of something slippery to make it slide down the throat. Dipping the porridge in a liquid stew makes it easier to swallow. Thus the use of *umunani*, which to European eyes adds valuable constituents to the diet, is defended by the native on the ground that it overcomes the purely mechanical difficulty of getting the food down the throat. Some of the relishes are themselves difficult to swallow, in particular the wild forms of spinach (*umusalu*), which are stringy and often bitter. These the natives cook with ground-nut sauce (*ntwilo*) (cf. p. 95). To the European this seems to add a valuable constituent to the diet—fat—of which the supply is short in this area, but the Bemba himself explains that the sauce is not food. It is used to make the relish soft. It prevents the food 'coming back'. Meat and vegetable stews are cooked with salt whenever possible, and there is no doubt that an additional function of the relish in native eyes is to give the porridge taste and to lessen the monotony of the diet. Ground-nut sauce is also praised as bringing out the taste of a number of different relishes such as mushrooms, caterpillars, &c.

In general, only one relish is eaten at a meal. The Bemba do not like to mix their foods, and despise the European habit of eating a meal composed of two or three kinds of dishes. He calls this habit *ukusobelekanya* and one said, 'It is like a bird first to pick at this and then at that, or like a child who nibbles here and there through the day.'[1]

This habit of eating one relish at a time can probably be accounted for by the fact that there are few available choices of dish in any one day, and that the Bemba, with their traditional customs of hospitality, finish up all they cook. They do not keep a little bit of stew in a larder for to-morrow. It would be eaten by a passing relative. Nor do they plan several days' menu ahead

[1] But it is clear that the Bemba are not here implicating any modern dietetic theory, such as the principle advocated recently by Dr. Hay, that protein and starch should not be eaten together, for their favourite meal is porridge and meat.

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262 and so have two or three dishes on tap. Whatever the origin of
●264 the prejudice, they stick to it fairly constantly even when adopting European foods. Natives, and in particular children, who have the opportunity to buy groceries in urban districts, will sit down at a counter and eat half a pound of sugar at a time, not keeping it to sprinkle over other foods. It remains to be seen how long this habit will last in contact with civilization.

Bemba Dietetic Theory.

261 Besides their general ideas as to what a meal should consist of,
827 the Bemba have definite views as to the effects of eating and drinking. Savage theories of digestion probably vary from area to area as widely as do their ideas regarding procreation, although we have little comparative information on the subject at the moment. The Trobriand islanders, according to Malinowski, eat for the pleasure it gives them, and are entirely unaware that their health and strength depend on the process.[1] The Bemba are more realistic. They are quite convinced that food is eaten to give them physical energy, and recognize the weakening effects of any deficiency. Accustomed to an annual seasonal shortage, they reckon to postpone certain heavy agricultural tasks until they feel they have recovered from the previous weeks of underfeeding, and the greater the scarcity, the longer the delay. Natives whom I asked in June why they had not yet started to clear the bush for their gardens[2] answered, 'We are waiting till the millet is ripe and we have begun to eat again—until our arms have grown strong.' A young man whom I had laughed at for not weeding his garden in the early spring shrugged his shoulders, and merely answered in explanation, 'February'. Shortage is so commonly expected at this time of year that the mere mention of the name of the month was considered quite a sufficient excuse for the lapse. The connexion between diet, and diet of a particular sort, and energy is

[1] B. Malinowski, *Coral Gardens and their Magic*, 1935, vol. i, pp. 226–8, also *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, 1922, pp. 168–72. It is significant that this is an area where food is plentiful, and where its accumulation and exchange is one of the chief economic and social ambitions of every man in the community. 'We shall eat, and eat till we vomit', the Trobriander's dream of contentment, has therefore particular sociological significance in this society. The situation is different among the Bemba.

[2] April or May would have been the more usual time to start this work. It will be seen from Chapters XV and XVIII that the hardest agricultural work actually coincides with the end of the hunger months.

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consumption of meals has to be fitted. Among primitive peoples, these facts stand out more clearly perhaps than in our own.

To the Bemba the meal is, in a sense, the climax of the day. Cooking is a long and tedious process, as will be seen (Chap. V). The whole series of activities involved in fetching fuel, drawing water, preparing flour and collecting relish must be begun afresh each day, and can be reckoned to take at least 3 hours out of that day. But the time and nature of the meal is fixed by the type of agricultural work in hand.[1] This fact accounts for two of the chief characteristics of Bemba eating custom: the concentration on a single daily meal, and the irregularity of that meal. Although the Bemba may take some snack in the early morning such as cold *ubwali* left over from the night before, or some sweet potatoes or ground-nuts, it is quite impossible for the women to prepare a dish of porridge and relish more than once a day unless they are free from other work. Men and women are accustomed to go to their gardens in the early morning to do the bulk of their work on what we habitually describe as 'an empty stomach'. They return to the village at about noon, when the whole community waits for the evening meal. This habit of eating late in the day seems to have become fixed. Natives working in European employment tend to keep to it. Loaded carriers seem to prefer to walk their daily fifteen miles or so before eating, and labourers on European farms usually do the morning shift, from 6 a.m. to noon, without a 'breakfast'. In at least one Mission school, where the young native teachers were offered food before morning classes, they refused, saying they would not be able to work properly if they ate so early in the day. It is difficult to know whether such preferences are due entirely to habit, or whether the type of meal eaten by the Bemba actually takes a long time to digest. It is interesting to note that the compound managers of the copper mines at the Roan Antelope and Mufulira considered that the natives worked better if they had eaten a breakfast before going on shift, and made this practice compulsory, but the meal was not the heavy porridge in this case, but cocoa and white bread.

This concentration on a single meal is a habit to which the children are only accustomed gradually. Bemba infants, as we saw, are suckled whenever they wish, and in early childhood they eat all day long if possible. Natives recognize that small children

[1] Cf. pp. 73, 104 and Chap. XVIII.

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cannot go so long without food as their elders and cook them extras when they can. Women who stay at home in the village all morning roast ground-nuts for the little children, or bake them sweet potatoes in season, while all the young people forage for what they can get from various relatives, or look for fruits in the bush. Mothers going to work may be seen carrying smouldering embers on a bark holder, ready to make small fires to roast maize cobs if they happen to be ripe in the gardens. But when food is short the children have to go without and expect to do so, and as they reach adolescence they begin to adopt the tribal belief that it is childish and undignified to be eating at all hours of the day. They finally express the ordinary adult preference for a meal late in the day rather than early. Some natives comment half disparagingly on the frequency of the white man's meals, although of course they admire the riches of a European who is constantly able to entertain his friends. The white man, chiefly the government official in this area, has now become a standardized figure in a series of folk-tales, and in these he is always represented as stopping constantly in the middle of any activity to take breakfasts or to drink tea. I once listened to some small boys playing at being Europeans—a very favourite game. The boy who was acting as the district officer sat lounging in an imitation chair made of branches and bark rope and repeatedly called, 'Bring food'. At last one of his fellows, acting servant, said aside in an aghast whisper, 'You can't ask for food again. We've only just brought it to you.' The 'white man's' answer was immediate. 'You know nothing about Europeans! That is just what they do all day—just sit and call, Boy! Bring me food.'

The chief meal of the Bemba varies tremendously both as to its time, its size, and the accessory foods that may be added to it during the day. These changes depend chiefly on the nature of the women's agricultural work from season to season, the monthly changes in the types of food available, and the time taken to cook them. For instance, at Pambalasa village (September 1930), the women were working late into the day to finish piling the branches for burning in their gardens. They were back late to the village, and got the single meal ready at about five. There was no early morning snack for most of them. At Candamukulu's village (April 1931), the women were harvesting, but at this time of the year the maize was ripe, and a few cobs could be quickly roasted at about 8 a.m. as well as the evening meal, which varied in individual cases

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from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. At the court of the Paramount chief I have noticed during several visits paid at different times of the year that the wives of the Citimukulu, who had very few agricultural duties, cooked small dishes of porridge for themselves twice a day, at about 10 and 4 p.m., while continuing to prepare the one big evening meal for the chief's labourers. The more detailed daily records kept at Kasaka village (September 1933) (pp. 178–83) show a decided variation in individual cases in this respect. These examples show clearly the extent to which economic routine and the seasonal changes in the food-supply alter, not only the time of the main meal of the day, but the actual daily intake of each individual in the form of extra snacks. These variations would upset many European digestions, but natives are either so used to delay that they do not feel discomfort, or else they resign themselves to the inevitable. I never heard a Bemba husband complain that his meal was late. On return from work the men sit about in their club-house, an open shelter called *nsaka*, for several hours, gradually growing more listless if the delay has been prolonged, and talking in a more desultory way. They seem able to eat more at a time than we could most of us manage, and to go longer periods without. Some carriers of mine took 50-lb. loads 15 miles a day for two days eating a few gourds one day and nothing but wild fruit the next, but after this effort they lay down and rested for a few days, and presumably ate all they could get. Another set of carriers similarly burdened ate 10 lb. of cassava each in 2½ days (average ration about a pound a day), and then walked another 42 miles on about 4 dried fish apiece. They explained their action by saying, 'Our loads were so heavy that we thought, "Let's carry our food in our bellies".'[1] Such a method of dividing up a ration would probably be inconceivable to the average Englishman who is intellectually convinced of the advisability of eating the same each day, and has been accustomed in most cases to do so. It is an interesting illustration of the way in which the environmental limitations of a people's food supply, the methods of cooking they practise, their hospitality rules and general system of distribution, all act in concert to condition their appetites and digestive habits.

It remains to describe the actual consumption of a Bemba meal. To the casual observer the most characteristic feature of their

[1] *Twatile fipe nafifina, katusenda munda!* Information sent me by Mrs. Gore-Brownt.

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manner of eating is its speed and almost complete lack of ceremony. 264
It is true that there is a certain amount of etiquette prescribed before the meal is actually started. Invitations must be issued respectfully for instance, and water brought to wash the hands of the guests. But once the company, whether of men or women, is gathered, there is no further delay. The five or six eaters squat round the vessels of food, and bolt the meal silently and swiftly. Lumps of porridge are torn off and swallowed apparently almost whole, and two or three pounds of *ubwali* disappears in as many moments. The eaters rise, turn on their heels and leave. Plenty of food is the *sine qua non* of gaiety and social activity in Bemba society, but eating itself is never considered a recreation. Meals are not times for rest, or chat, or merriment. In fact, it might be said there was almost something furtive about the group of eaters bowed over a porridge basket, and it is considered rude to address or to look at anyone during their meal. It would be equivalent to asking for a share.

These customs, which obviously affect the digestive habits of the people, are directly correlated with their material culture. Bemba who share food sit round one basket, and each tears off porridge from one lump. In these circumstances it is impossible to linger. While the man who eats faster than his fellows causes resentment, the one who eats too slowly goes hungry. For an eater to pause to tell an anecdote, as we might do, secure in possession of our own plate, would be fatal. It must be remembered, too, that Bemba houses have only one room, in or near which the women eat. Men take their meals in the full publicity of the whole village, hence there is a certain amount of hurry and shame attached. People do not like to eat when others are not doing so.

The usual meal of porridge and relish is served hot, but the temperature does not seem to be a matter of great importance to the natives. If the men are late, their porridge stands about gradually chilling, and is not put back to keep hot on the fire. Natives will eat lumps of cold porridge left over from the night before, and small pieces are carried while travelling. Water is not often drunk with meals, for fear it should make the porridge swell. 264 271
A man may wash out his mouth with water before eating—*ukufumya malima*—'to remove the stickiness of the night', or he may drink after specially good food that has 'left itself in the throat'. He will only drink during a meal with a bitter food that 'makes our mouths

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dry as if there wasn't any saliva in them'.[1] It is very important to natives to get the right proportion of relish to porridge. Every one wants to get as much relish as possible, and here the rules of procedure are fixed. An old man may tear off a lump of *ubwali* and make it into a hollow spoon. This he will dip into the liquid relish and then pick up as much relish as possible (*ukuleme nkondwa*). The child, or inferior, may only just dip the porridge into the relish to moisten it (*ukutumpika*), and thus the proportion of vegetable varies very much according to age. A young man will not dare *ukuleme nkondwa* until he is given the permission by his father, said to be granted when the boy is able to do a full day's work in the gardens. A girl should wait the invitation of her mother before trying to take an adult portion of relish, and on the few occasions when a wife eats with her husband, in the privacy of their hut at night, she is supposed merely to dip her porridge in the stew like a child, until she reaches middle or old age when, among the Bemba, all sex disabilities seem to disappear.

Bemba eating customs can therefore be said to differ considerably from our own, both as regards the rhythm of meals, the regularity of daily intake, and the serving and rate of consumption, but in each case the manner of eating is just as precisely defined by cultural rule and related as strictly to the general economic system and social grouping of the people concerned. Even the proportion of liquid to solid, or relish to porridge, is prescribed by etiquette.

Beer Drinking.

Bemba beer (*ubwalua*) is one of their most important foodstuffs. It is made from the staple cereal itself.[2] It is a valuable source of vitamin B in which the diet is otherwise deficient.[3] On the day when it is drunk very few natives eat any other form of food, and some individuals, mostly chiefs, subsist on it entirely from day to day. But *ubwalua* is far more than a mere food. It is the people's only kind of entertainment, the chief break in the monotony of

[1] Information collected by Mrs. Gore-Browne.

[2] The Bantu peoples make beer from a number of different sources according to their environment, eleusine, Kaffir-corn, maize, cassava, bananas, honey, and, in the Congo, wine from palms and sugar-cane. The Bemba preference for millet beer is shared by a number of people such as the Bisa (of the swamps), or the Venda of the Transvaal (H. Stayt, *The Bavenda*, p. 35) who grow the cereal specially for the purpose.

[3] Kaffir beer is included as part of the rations issued to mine-workers on the Rand scale chiefly for this reason.

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356 recesses for storing objects, and dried foods lie in confusion on the rack above the fire, or are kept in pots or gourds standing round the wall. Clothes, if the owner happens to have a change, lie on or under the bed; weapons and bundles of bark are hung on pegs on the wall. Magic charms or medicines are concealed under the eaves. Nevertheless, in spite of this air of apparent disorder, the Bemba housewife has certain standards of cleanliness and 'turns out' her hut quite frequently.

The floor, used as kitchen table, chair, and cupboard, must be swept with a grass brush once or twice a day. Though it is not scrubbed, it is frequently mudded over afresh. This is done sometimes for ritual purposes before relighting a new fire ceremonially[1] and sometimes for reasons of cleanliness only. Small babies are allowed to urinate all over the floor, but adults, even in the last stages of illness, demand to be carried outside for this purpose however cold the night. Sleeping mats are washed frequently and blankets put out to air in the sun. The washing of eating vessels
● 264 is simplified by the Bemba custom of sharing from one dish. Figures showing the employment of time by American farm workers show that these civilized housekeepers spend a quarter to half of the time devoted to domestic work in setting meals and washing up the dishes afterwards.[2] The Bemba housewife, on the contrary, has only two or three eating baskets to scrub and put to dry in the sun. Pottery cooking vessels or enamel saucepans are rubbed with ashes or gravel. Porridge spoons are stood in a special gourd of water and should not be allowed to touch the floor.

296 The washing of clothes has now become a very important activity to the native, and must be considered under the heading of housecraft. The bark-cloth wraps used before the coming of the white man could not be washed, but a primitive kind of soap made from the bark of a tree natives call *umupape* (*Seguridaca longipedunculata?*), was used to cleanse some of the imported Arab cloth. Nowadays, cotton goods are worn practically universally. Generally they are rubbed against stones in running streams, and in these circumstances it is not unnatural that the white cloth, so much liked by the Bemba, quickly becomes a dirty yellow. Those

[1] A frequent occurrence during the infancy of a small child.

[2] 'The Use of Time by S. Dakota Homemakers', Grace E. Wasson, *Homemakers*, Bulletin 247. S. Dakota State College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts, March 1920, p 16.

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252 of dishes and enamel basins, and each is covered with a basket. Then the housewife hands them one by one to waiting children, saying, 'For X', 'For Z', and the little boys and girls hurry off to different huts or *nsaka* in the village carrying their loads on their heads.

• 264 During meal-times a different form of grouping displays itself. The unit of food preparation does not coincide exactly with the unit of consumption, although both exceed the limits of the individual family. The first division of the community at meal-times is along the lines of sex. Men and women eat separately. Even husband and wife never share a meal, except at night in the privacy of their own hut. It is considered shameful for the two sexes to eat together, and the Bemba women back from the mines who occasionally copy the European custom of joint meals, usually do so out of bravado, and are spoken of in bated breath. [332] To say, 'She eats with men' is almost equivalent to calling a woman a prostitute in all but the urban areas, and the efforts of some educationalists to introduce family meals as part of 'Christian family life' have been hotly criticized by older natives.

This grouping of the sexes at meal-times is further subdivided on the basis of age, kinship, and friendship. Nobody eats alone. Each belongs to a set of his contemporaries who regularly share meals together. The grouping by age is not absolute, but is customary and follows the people's inclinations. In a small village it is usual for all the *bakalamba*—'big men'—to eat together at their own *nsaka* or to group together in turn on one of their respective verandas. In a larger settlement there may be two or three such groups of old men usually united by close ties of kinship. The young men eat at the village shelter where their food is regularly brought them. [602] It may not be possible for all the young married men of a village to eat round one dish, for the in-law avoidances, still punctiliously observed among the Bemba, prevent a husband from feeding with any of his wife's relatives, real or classificatory. Hence it is customary to find round the village *nsaka* at least two groups—the young men born in the village and the outsiders who have come into the community to marry their sisters or cross-cousins. When the porridge arrives they form into two rings back to back round their own dishes. In larger villages there is a greater choice of possible associates, and personal friendship and geographical propinquity help to fix the choice. Even where the *nsaka* system

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has been almost abandoned, as it has in modern villages near Kasama,[1] the young men regularly eat in fours and fives, and any intelligent boy or girl in the village will tell you promptly with whom X or Y eats.[2] On a journey with a party of carriers, a European will notice that within a day or two his followers settle down to share their rations in messes of their own which they describe as a *conto*, which can be roughly translated as a place to warm oneself.

The women do not belong to fixed eating groups of this type. They share their food on the verandas of different huts, two or three nearly related households eating together with the children of each. Girls continue to eat with their mothers until they marry, and usually afterwards. Boys of 9 or 10 are considered too old to eat with the women and are expected to forage for themselves. They trap birds and moles, sit hungrily round the young men's *nsaka* waiting for remains, and only occasionally are lucky enough to get a special dish cooked for themselves.

It is clear then from the most superficial description of village life that food is prepared and consumed in a larger unit than the individual household; that the women of several huts join together to cook, and meals are shared by small groups based on sex, age, kinship, and marriage rules. The effect of such a system of catering on the dietary of the Bemba must now be described.

[1] The greater movement of natives in these suburban villages makes them unwilling to build shelters in order that 'others may sit in them'.

[2] It will be seen that these particular eating customs, common in Bantu Africa, make it exceedingly difficult to make quantitative records of the daily intake of each individual, as food weighed and cooked in one hut is eaten by a varying number of people in another—a difficulty that nutritional investigators will have to face.

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may become pregnant before her initiation ceremony (*icisungu*) has been performed. After this rite the marriage ceremony itself takes place, and the bride returns to her husband's hut.

During this period of betrothal and early marriage the bridegroom is fed by his mother-in-law who sends him dishes of cooked food, which he shares with the other young men in the village. If he has married within the family or village, the bride's mother does not consider herself entirely responsible for his food, but still sends him dishes when convenient. The wife meanwhile continues to eat with the women of her own family. After a time a bridegroom may choose to make a separate millet patch of his own as well as clearing the bush and working in his father-in-law's garden, but in either case his nutritive dependence is unchanged. At harvest the grain is carried to the granary of his wife's family and for some years after marriage he is not allowed to build a store of his own. His wife in the meantime is equally dependent on her mother's household. She is not even allowed a fire-place of her own, and is considered unfit to cook or handle her supplies. A young girl's hut has a fire, but no cooking supports for her pots, and she does all her household work as one of her mother's working team. About a year after the marriage ceremony the girl is 'given a fire-place' (*ukumupela shiko*) by her mother, and is allowed to cook in her own hut the flour ground in her mothers'.[1] Hereafter the mother will occasionally give her daughter a basket of millet to grind and cook for herself instead of sharing in the family supplies. It depends how much food is available on any one day, for it is recognized that it is more economical for people to eat together from the same dish. But to be given grain to grind herself, whether for beer or porridge, is a privilege highly appreciated. It is the bride's initial step of independence, for it gives her the right for the first time to distribute food or drink to her own and her husband's friends. As a next step, the son-in-law builds his own granary, if his wife is considered fit to take charge of the grain-supply. The young couple continue to rely on the parent household for additional support, and the wife still cooks and eats her food with her mother and sisters. Later the young married people, themselves probably parents by this time, become completely responsible for their own commissariat, although the woman, if she continues to live in her own village, carries her basket of millet to her mother's

[1] I never saw this ceremony performed, and have no full account of it.

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free to eat the foods she has cooked for him.[1] After a period varying anything from five to fifteen years he is ceremoniously admitted to his wife's family (*ukumuingishya*) 'to make him enter in', and after this feast and dance the keeping of the in-law taboos is at an end. This rite takes place when the marriage appears absolutely stable and two or more children have been born, and the ceremony is no mere picturesque survival at the present day. The early years of Bemba marriage are a genuine period of trial, and fathers-in-law do not hesitate to refuse to admit their daughter's husbands into their family if the latter have not won their full approval. I heard of a case in which a man performed the *ukuingishya* ceremony for his youngest son-in-law after a period of two years, because he was a steady, likeable fellow, but postponed the rite for ten in the case of his eldest daughter's husband who was less dependable. It is only when husbands are scarce, under modern conditions of absentee labour, that fathers are afraid to exert their jurisdiction over their sons-in-law in the traditional way.

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The Symbolism of Cooked Food.

The feeding of the *shifyala* is not only one of the economic obligations of the marriage contract, but part of the complicated pattern of etiquette prescribed between the bridegroom and his wife's family. It is, in fact, one of those instances in which the giving and receiving of cooked food has become symbolic of the legal or economic relationship which entails it. It is particularly important to notice that the preparation of porridge and relish is the woman's most usual way of expressing the correct kinship sentiment towards her different male relatives, for this actually affects the distribution of food in the community. The case of the son-in-law is characteristic.

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The Bemba custom of sending food to the son-in-law, *ukutebeta shifyala*, with all the ceremonial that surrounds it, is one of the essential elements of the prescribed etiquette between the wife's family and that of the husband. The young son-in-law may be an outsider and a nobody in some respects, but he must be treated

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[1] The full series of ceremonies are rarely performed nowadays, but the son-in-law will probably be made ritually free of one or two of the chief foods. Compare the observance of the *Hlonipa* customs of avoidance by the Zulu bride, coming to live in her husband's village according to the principles of patrilocal marriage, and the ceremonial by which she is gradually made free to drink the milk in the kraal of her relatives by marriage.

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with the right courtesies. He must have that due so precious to the Bemba, and so constantly the subject of discussion—*mucinshi*—which might be translated respect, courtesy, or recognition of one's rightful status.

The first dish of porridge sent to the young bridegroom is considered an interesting and exciting event even in present circumstances, when much of the ritual surrounding it has been dropped. A little girl of 12, betrothed for the first time, explained to me with shining eyes what would happen when her 16-year-old bridegroom came to take up his residence in her village that night. 'We shall make him porridge,' she said in delighted tones, 'we shall send it to him where he sits in the men's shelter. He has become our child, i.e. a member of our family, or a dependent of ours' (*Asanguka mwana uesu*). Women like to speak of the food they cook for their daughter's husbands. To provide big dishes of porridge and occasional gourds of beer for her *shifyala* is a wealthy woman's pride, and she will take great care to serve and cover the food baskets in the correct way (*ukupikula*). In fact, the Bemba, who delight in the ceremonious carrying-out of obligations, like to make a parade of this custom of feeding the son-in-law, particularly to a stranger. A native sitting in my tent would often turn and look through the open door and point out with a pleased expression the small boys with baskets of porridge on their heads who were walking off to the men's shelter, and exclaim with satisfaction at the sight. A typical comment would be, 'Look! They are carrying food to the sons-in-law! It is *mucinshi!* That is our custom; and in the old days it was just the same.' It is not uncommon for women to deny themselves food rather than let their daughter's husband go short. In the hunger months I saw a more or less starving old woman near Kasama prepare her last dish of food for her son-in-law, who was himself a well-paid young teacher at the Government school. She went without herself. 'It is what is due to the son-in-law' (*ukucindika shifyala*), she said shortly when I expressed surprise.

The young husbands themselves are, of course, equally insistent that they should be treated with the right etiquette. If the wife's family is short of food, or of labour to cook it, on any occasion, there is no cause for complaint. But if it is once suspected that the mother-in-law is merely being stingy, then the insult is felt to be grave. It is a sufficient cause for the break-up of the marriage.

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I met two attractive sisters left unmarried long after the usual time and asked the reason. I was told, 'Their husbands come and live here a short time, and then they go. They say, "The mother is mean. She stints us of porridge. She gives us no respect."' In the same way I have heard young men discussing the pros and cons of cross-cousin marriage and concluding, 'Cross-cousin marriage is not so good. Our aunts (*banyina senge*) do not give us as much respect as other women would. They do not send us food every day or cover the dishes elegantly.'

The importance of the offering of food to the son-in-law continues long after the wife has become an independent householder, cooking on her own. His mother-in-law continues to send him dishes. In fact, the offering of food by the woman to the man is one of the essential obligations of kinship and other social ties. It is part of the legal duty of a wife to cook porridge for her husband and to allow him a predominant share of it, and hence it becomes a privilege and a matter of pride. I noticed that young girls, recently betrothed, would intimate this fact by saying shyly: 'I have begun to cook for him.' Older married women will beg, borrow, or work for food to supply their husbands if their own granary is empty. Each wife in a polygamous household will cook for her husband even if she has insufficient for herself, so that a husband may get two or three dishes of porridge while a wife and her children may go short. I saw a second wife, whose garden had been destroyed by locusts, live with her three children for two days entirely on mushrooms, while the last remnants of her millet were ground up daily to provide a diminutive dish of porridge for her husband, the latter amply supplied by his more fortunate head-wife, who had so much surplus millet that she sat at the other end of the village brewing beer with it. To my question as to why the second wife did not keep her grain for herself and her children and leave the first to supply the husband, the reply was immediate: 'Because she hates her fellow wife.' The rivalry natural between co-wives was expressed in the competition over the provision of food. The Bemba woman's prestige largely rests on her power to provide porridge and relish for her male relatives and to serve it nicely. These are the dues a man expects from his mother-in-law, his wife, and a number of other women in his kinship group.

It is the *umucinshi*[1] that matters to both parties, as well as the filling of the belly. Hence the women in a village do not attempt

[1] i.e., custom. – Analyst

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264 to organize the supply of eating-baskets sent to the young men's shelter. There may be two one day and twelve another.[1] It does not matter. Every mother-in-law sends just whenever she has time and supplies, so that the men of the village have a varying amount to eat from day to day. The regularity of the diet is thus directly affected by the symbolic use of offerings of cooked food.

The Cooking Team.

252 476 602 We have turned for a moment from our main subject, the joint preparation of food, but it will be seen that the system of inter-dependent matrilocal households provides two units of economic co-operation, the women's and the men's. The former look for relish, fetch firewood, pound, grind, and cook together, and usually do their gardening work in twos and threes. The latter clear the bush for gardens jointly and, more rarely, hoe in common. But it is important to remember that the ties of kinship between the women's group are stronger than those between men. The women who work together are usually the old grandmother, her married daughter, her unmarried girls and adolescent granddaughters, besides other female relatives temporarily with her. The team may not be as large, of course. Every household in the village does not belong to a 'big house'. There may be only two or three individual families linked together, especially in a new village. But the basis of co-operation is the same in each case—mother and daughter, grandmother and granddaughter, sister and sister,[2] &c., and it is the matrilocal family pattern which will be ultimately reproduced [595] as a normal process of development. So much is this the case that the wives of a polygamist never cook together, but each works with her own mother, sister, or any other female relatives who may happen to be in the village.[3] It is the solidarity and common activities of groups of the mother-daughter type which form the basis of the Bemba village. A man's own female relatives, his mother and sister, may be dependent on him, but they do not [606 607] form part of the cooking unit. In-law taboos prevent a woman from co-operating closely with her mother-in-law, and her relations with her sister-in-law are usually constrained, if not hostile.

[1] Cf. p. 183. [2] Using these terms in the classificatory sense.

[3] The wives of a chief are often an exception in this respect. They seem to have accepted the status of polygamy more completely than the wives of commoners, and the heavy work involved in cooking for tribute labour makes it almost necessary for them to co-operate.

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fatigue of the old women left alone to housekeep with their daughters away. On nine days meat was eaten and a whole buck was divided on one occasion. The other fortunes and misfortunes of the kitchen affected individual households alone.

Three Families Housekeep.

To illustrate the preparation and distribution of food in detail, three matrilocal family groups have been selected for description out of the five observed. These are: A, B, and D, and the linking of the different households composing these units is indicated on the plan on p. 177 by dotted lines. The amount of food consumed by each unit is roughly shown on the tables on pp. 178–83 and it will be seen how, in each case, the size of the consuming group, the labour-supply, male and female, and differences in the social status and individual temperament of its members affect the daily intake of food.

Group A. Kasaka, the head of Group A and headman of the village, had three households under his care. He lived in his own hut with his wife NaMarya (A2). His three younger children, Kapea (A7), a girl of 14,[1] Marya (A8), aged 7, and Cileshye (A9) aged 5, came to eat, but not to sleep. Kasaka had his own dish of food, to which he called one or two of his old cronies, such as the heads of Groups B and C, joining them on their verandas in turn. His small son might have been invited to share the meal if his table manners had not disgusted his father, and so he remained eating with his mother and sisters instead. The second household of the group was that of Kampamba (A5), who was temporarily on a visit and whose husband was away at the mines. In the third house lived another daughter, Kampamba (A6), who had been married over a year. She had been given her own fire-place but not her own granary, so that her husband, Findee (F6), was still entirely dependent on his father-in-law for food. Usually a basket was sent to him at the men's shelter, but on five days out of nineteen his wife was given flour to cook for herself, or to carry out into the bush for his meal. In the fourth house lived Nakulu Marya (A3), the crippled old mother of

[1] Kapea engaged herself to be married to a young boy from a neighbouring village during my visit and demanded grain to grind for him, but the father refused, as the marriage had not received the formal consent of the bridegroom's parents. The boy was therefore merely allowed to share a dish with the other son-in-law and was not treated with the 'cooking of honour'.

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Heads of cooking-teams. Four grandmothers ruling over 'big houses'. Women and children eat together.

[facing p. 192]

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562 often becomes imperious and managing and obviously enjoys her position as she sits on the verandah of a large hut, directing operations and dividing food. This is the position a woman achieves by a stable marriage, and one which she longs to achieve.

833 Sex relations are openly desired by Bemba and celibacy for men or women is not admired. A girl who rejects men is criticized as having 'pride of the womb' (*cilumba ca munda*). Abstinence is only practised for ritual reasons, by a woman nursing a child, for instance. Adultery in women was, however, savagely punished in 837 the old days and is a cause of divorce. It is still thought to cause death in childbirth. Men are not very seriously criticized for adultery although it is thought a terrible crime for them to 'kill' their children by not submitting to the purification rites.

462 The two sexes are divided in everyday life as regards their work ● 264 and recreations. Men sit in their own shelter at night and eat together there. Women, on the other hand, are grouped round their own house verandahs. Men have their own economic tasks and 593 women theirs. Girls do not enter marriage with any ideal of companionship with their husband. A young couple is not expected to show affection in public and a bridegroom tends to be despised for spending time with his wife. But affection grows over the years in the case of a stable marriage.

593 There are certain obvious contradictions in the husband's 562 position. Menfolk are dominant in Bemba society. Women used to [576] greet men kneeling, and they still do so on formal occasions today. Men receive the best of the food and take precedence at beer drinks and on other social occasions. They speak first in family matters. Men are expected to take the initiative in sex affairs. Women are married (*ukwupwa*—the passive form) while men marry (*ukwupa*—the active form). Girls are taught to please their husbands and are considered responsible for giving them pleasure in sex relations. Women calmly accept the fact that their husbands will beat them 'when they are young and their hearts get hot quickly'.

593 The contradiction between the masterful male and the sub- 562 missive son-in-law, between the secure young married woman backed by her own relatives and the submissive kneeling wife, is one which first struck me forcibly in the course of the chisungu

791 778 The *ng'anga* (magicians) of whose activity little is known, dwelt in a banana grove just south of the capital which no outsiders could enter on pain of death.(1)

782 789 787 [784] Human sacrifices were made at the capital.(2) Victims were prisoners of war and, failing them, the Kazembe's own subjects. Human blood, hearts and entrails are mentioned among the ingredients of which medicines were made.(3) Horns containing medicine were supposed to give protection from witchcraft. Before any hazardous enterprise - war, hunting, travel - was undertaken, an oracle was consulted(4) and, if prospects looked auspicious, a medicine was prepared.(5)

264 643 787 The Kazembe was said to receive warnings of hostile machinations in dreams. If he dreamt of someone more than once this was a sign that the man was plotting against him and must be put to death.(6) Crawford was informed that the Kazembe was ritually insulted during his meals, and he describes this in some detail.(7) "The king eats in a mysterious mode called *kapoalo*... The 'old doctors' cursed him while he ate, his face veiled: 'Kazembe should die! He is no man! A beast! Kill the beast, oh! son of Temena (his mother's name)' ". The *mondo* was sounded to let people know that Kazembe was having his meal, and no one else was allowed to eat at the same time.

834 783 [834] Ritual cleansing is prescribed after sexual intercourse. A man who kills a lion has to be washed in *nshipa* medicine by the headman before he can enter the village, and may not eat or speak till this has been done.

226 789 A wealth of ritual attached to fishing. Ritual authority was vested in the Shila "owners of the land".(8) The ceremony of *ukufungule sabi* (unlocking the fish) was performed annually towards the middle of the dry season on all the waters except the Luapula which "belongs to God". Bits of medicine were attached to the nets in order to ensure a good catch and prevent the nets from being torn. Charms were worn by fishermen or suspended at the bows to protect the canoe from being capsized by hippo or crocodiles. When the canoe was first launched the women sprinkled it with a little cassava flour to ensure plentiful catches. A women, particularly when carrying a child, was forbidden to step over a net. Sexual relations were tabooed when the fish were being poisoned. Lake Mweru was apparently never crossed south of Kilwa island, according to Livingstone.(9) At the "cursing" ceremony on Lake Mweru the dead men drowned in the lake were called by name and reprimanded.(10) Those who came safe ashore after their boats had foundered were greeted with a deliverance song and led in a thanksgiving procession.(11)

(1) Gamitto, I, p.358.
(2) Pereira puts the number of human victims at twenty a day (Livingstone, I, p.265). This is probably no more trustworthy than is his statement that Kazembe's army numbered 20,000 trained soldiers. R.J. Moore discusses human sacrifices as if at the time he wrote (1937) they were still common and an essential part of the salt-making ritual. The victim, according to him, is "nowadays usually a child".
(3) Burton, p.126.
(4) ibid., p.228.
(5) ibid., p.128.
(6) Livingstone, I, p.277.
(7) Crawford, 2, p.104.
(8) Livingstone, op.cit., p.252.
(9) op.cit., p.269.
(10) Crawford, op.cit., p.105.
(11) ibid., pp.105-6.